

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**literal language:** words that are used according to their dictionary definitions.

**figurative language:** words used in an imaginative way to express ideas by comparison or suggestion, rather than by literal concrete meanings. Figurative language includes figures of speech, such as simile and metaphor.

**simile:** a figure of speech that compares two unlike things, using the words *like* or *as*.

**metaphor:** use of language to compare two unlike things, *without* using the words *like* or *as*.

## HERE'S HOW

**Step 1: Identify similes.** Look for imaginative comparisons using the words *like* or *as*.

**EXAMPLE** The wall of floodwater hit our house **like** a bulldozer.  
The summer rain was as warm **as** a kiss.

**Step 2: Identify metaphors.** Use the following techniques:

- Look for comparisons that show the common qualities of two unlike things using a form of the verb *to be*—*is*, *are*, *were*.

**EXAMPLE** Fear **is** a cancer that destroys people.

- Also look for words that usually are associated with one image or concept used in a new context or a new way.

**EXAMPLE** The principal **blew** through the hallways.

**Step 3: Analyze metaphors and figures of speech.** To find the meaning of a simile or metaphor, ask yourself the following three questions:

- What two unlike things are being compared?
- What quality or qualities do the two things being compared share?
- By highlighting these similarities, what point is the author trying to make?